Spring carnival planning kit

A head start for your PTO or PTA board. Take what's useful and change the rest.

Timeline

12 weeks out

- [ ] Pick a date and a rain date
  Look for clashes with sports, testing, and holiday weekends.
- [ ] Get approval to use the school grounds
  Ask about parking, restrooms, power, and who will open and lock up.
- [ ] Choose an event lead and a small committee
- [ ] Set the budget and fundraising goal

10 to 8 weeks out

- [ ] Ask the school about insurance, rides, and food rules
  Inflatables, dunk tanks, and outside food can all have rules. Your school or district can tell you what applies.
- [ ] Get quotes for inflatables and a dunk tank
  Ask about weather and cancellation policies, setup space, and power.
- [ ] Choose the booths and who runs each
  Some groups ask each grade or club to run one booth.
- [ ] Decide on food, and whether to hold a cake walk
- [ ] Book rentals and food vendors
- [ ] Add a save the date to the school newsletter

6 weeks out

- [ ] Ask local businesses for raffle prizes and sponsors
- [ ] Share the volunteer signup link

4 to 5 weeks out

- [ ] Decide on ticket and wristband prices
  Wristbands for unlimited rides and tickets for games is one common mix.
- [ ] Design the flyer
- [ ] Send the flyer home and post it online

2 to 3 weeks out

- [ ] Sell presale wristbands
- [ ] Follow up on empty volunteer spots
- [ ] Order prizes and game supplies
- [ ] Ask families to bake for the cake walk
- [ ] Confirm every vendor, with arrival times
- [ ] Finalize the rain plan
  Decide who makes the call, when, and how families will hear.

The final week

- [ ] Send a reminder to families
- [ ] Buy everything on the shopping list
- [ ] Print signs, tickets, and booth instructions
- [ ] Get change and set up cash boxes
- [ ] Draw a map of booths, rides, and power
- [ ] Check the forecast and make the rain call

Carnival day

- [ ] Walk the grounds before volunteers arrive

After the carnival

- [ ] Thank volunteers, vendors, and donors
- [ ] Count the money and record receipts
- [ ] Reimburse anyone who paid out of pocket
- [ ] Write down what to change next year
  A few quick notes while it's fresh can save next year's board a lot of time.

Volunteer spots

A sample to adapt. Add, cut, or rename spots to suit your school.

Spot	When	People
Setup Crew Set up booths, tables, signs, and decorations.	8:30 AM to 11:00 AM	8
Ticket Table: First Shift Sell tickets and wristbands.	10:45 AM to 1:00 PM	3
Ticket Table: Second Shift Sell tickets and wristbands.	1:00 PM to 3:00 PM	3
Game Booths: First Shift Run a game and hand out prizes. No experience needed.	11:00 AM to 1:00 PM	8
Game Booths: Second Shift Run a game and hand out prizes. No experience needed.	1:00 PM to 3:00 PM	8
Ride Monitors Watch the line and the rules at each inflatable.	11:00 AM to 3:00 PM	4
Cake Walk Run the music and hand out cakes to the winners.	11:30 AM to 2:30 PM	2
Food Stand Serve food and keep the stand stocked.	11:00 AM to 3:00 PM	4
Cleanup Crew Pack up booths, take down signs, and leave the grounds clean.	2:45 PM to 4:30 PM	8

Sample budget

Placeholder amounts to help you get started, not real prices. Swap in your own numbers.

Item	Example	Our budget
Inflatables and rides	$900	
Food and drinks	$350	
Dunk tank rental	$250	
Prizes	$200	
Game supplies	$120	
Wristbands and tickets	$80	
Decorations	$60	
Flyers and signs	$40	
Total	**$2,000**	

Shopping list

Warehouse club

- [ ] Drinks and water
- [ ] Snacks
- [ ] Plates, cups, and napkins
- [ ] Trash bags
- [ ] Sunscreen and wipes

Party or dollar store

- [ ] Small prizes
- [ ] Number signs for the cake walk
- [ ] Balloons and streamers
- [ ] Tablecloths

Office supply store

- [ ] Wristbands
- [ ] Roll of tickets
- [ ] Cash boxes
- [ ] Tape, zip ties, and scissors
- [ ] Name tags for volunteers

Hardware store

- [ ] Extension cords
- [ ] Canopy weights
- [ ] Duct tape

Easy things to overlook

Power and space for rides
Inflatables need flat ground, room around them, and often power. A quick map saves moving them on the day.

Instructions at each booth
A card at each booth with the rules and prizes lets any volunteer step in.

Ride monitors
Rental companies usually want an adult at every inflatable. Listing them as their own spot makes sure they're covered.

Sun and water
Spring sun can surprise you. Water, shade, and sunscreen for volunteers make a long day easier.

Who makes the rain call
Everyone will ask, so it helps to agree early on who decides and by when.

Want it all in one place?
PineBoard can hold your tasks, volunteers, shopping, and budget together, and copies the plan to next year. Try it free for 60 days at pineboard.app.